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SCHOOL
DISTRICT

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Local District 6

Pupil Services and Attendance

Paving the Way

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The Bryson Way-A Big Success



Bryson Avenue Elementary School's Pupil Service Attendance and outreach programs are generating an exciting and motivating buzz around the school's community. This year Bryson has the privilege of having Ms. Araceli Marcelo as the PSA Counselor. She also functions as the SB 65 Outreach Coordinator. When Ms. Marcelo wears her "PSA hat", she is busy implementing creative incentive programs that have proven to have a direct and positive influence on the student attendance rate at Bryson. However, the most surprising development that has resulted in Ms. Marcelo's attendance incentives is the student's overwhelming desire to come to school everyday. Her programs are *infectious*! The entire school community is supporting her programs. One of the incentive programs that Ms. Marcelo is most proud of is the **Big Bryson Roving Trophy** program that encourages healthy grade level competition. This monthly program is ceremonially acknowledged during Monday morning assemblies. Students with perfect attendance also receive a gift each month for realizing the importance of daily attendance. The big pay offs come during

the middle and the end of the school year when students with perfect attendance are granted a **Perfect Attendance Certificate** and get the chance to receive bigger and better prizes if their name is picked as a result of the **Big Bryson Raffle** opportunity. Big Bryson winners have the opportunity to walk away with Special Edition Barbie Dolls, bicycles, MP3 players and much, much more. These are definitely "**Big**" reasons to come to school each day, as seen in the students' eyes. Ms. Marcelo is ecstatic about the success of Bryson's attendance programs but she believes the true heart of her labor lies in the resources she constantly uncovers in order to assist the students and families of Bryson in obtaining maximum academic and social advancement. Her accomplishments in this area are achieved when she wears her "**SB 65 Outreach Coordinator** hat". Her expert use of the **Student Success Team** (SST) yields the greatest benefits of realizing academic and social goals. During SST meetings, Ms. Marcelo is able to accurately assess the needs of families (with the help of other caring support staff) which could lead to obtaining further counseling, tutoring, health care or other valuable resources to families. Ms. Marcelo has expanded her SST efforts by planning a **Bryson Resource Fair** with the assistance of the Title One Coordinator, Mrs. Hernandez. She hopes to capture families who may need resources but are never seen through SST appearances. Ms. Marcelo continually attempts to find ways to improve Bryson. To date, Ms. Marcelo and Mrs. Trang, the School Psychologist, are spearheading a new program aimed at building positive behavioral responses among the student's at Bryson. During the time that the teachers meet in their professional learning communities, both Ms. Marcelo and Mrs. Trang co-facilitate **Character Building Lessons** with the students to address such things as friendship, teamwork, kindness and resolving differences. Ms. Marcelo states that their Character Building Lessons are just an expansion of the "**Bryson Way**". The "**Bryson Way**" would be any behavior that positively reinforces safety, respect for others, and responsibility at *all* times.

Former LAUSD Student Shares Her Life Changing Experiences at

Every year, the PSA Unit along with hundreds of law enforcement personnel and other educational support entities participate in a Countywide Truancy Symposium to hear new and innovative techniques surrounding the subject of truancy. This symposium allows our PSA Counselors to learn of even more ways to better track chronic truancy. Links between chronic truancy and a failed school experience were also explored using stories and statistics not only from other professionals but also from students who had challenges with regular attendance in the past. Los Angeles District Attorney Steve Cooley was on hand and stated, "When school-age children don't attend school, we all pay the price. Chronic truancy negatively affects students, families, schools and the social welfare and criminal justice systems and the entire community." South Gate High School PSA Counselor America Alvarenga-Phillips was one of the presenters at the symposium. Mrs. Alvarenga-Phillips shared a success story of one of her former South Gate High School student, Liset Escobar. Liset Escobar, now 18 years old, is a student at East Los Angeles College. During her speech, she publicly named her mother and Mrs. Alvarenga-Phillips for getting her life back on track. During her moving testimony, when most professionals were in tears, she stated, "They held on to me." PSA accepts challenges like Liset everyday. Mrs. Alvarenga-Phillips was honored to report an example of the many success stories that she as well as all PSA counselors experience in this line of work.

Congratulations!

All Secondary schools who achieved a rate over **95%** of attendance submitted for all their classes during School Month 3

- Bell HS
- Elizabeth LC
- Ochoa LC
- Huntington Park HS
- South Gate MS
- South Gate HS
- Maywood Academy
- Southeast HS
- Nimitz MS

Special Congratulations to those schools who achieved **100%** submission

- Southeast MS
- Gage MS

Keep up the Excellent Work!

Please note that those schools that do not achieve at least 95% attendance submission for all their classes are disqualified from the Attendance banner Competition for that month.

Attendance is Everybody's Business At Southeast Middle School

"Attendance Is Everybody's Business". This is the motto at Southeast Middle School and newly appointed principal, Wanda Sequeira, enthusiastically and energetically toils everyday to make their motto happen. PSA Counselor Neal Geisler states that attendance is **very good** at Southeast Middle School this year but he went on to state that he cannot take full credit for its high rate. Mr. Geisler insists it is a team effort. After being in the South Gate community for 16 years and at Southeast Middle School for 3 years, he is an expert at knowing what it takes to maintain high attendance rates. Mr. Geisler works closely with **all** support services and teaching staff to ensure students are in school and on time every day. If they are not, he tracks down parents, if necessary, and requires that they submit a valid document for an absence. School Nurse Cecilia Aubrey and Grade Level Counselors, Mr. Bonilla, Mr. Acosta and Ms. Romero are invaluable to Mr. Geisler's efforts in accomplishing this task. "School Nurse Aubrey always goes the extra mile", insists Mr. Geisler. "Her emphasis is always on wellness. She believes staying well is a strong key to good attendance." Southeast Middle's Grade Level Counselors are consummate in their service delivery. They pay special attention to students who have attendance challenges and the counselors' over-interest in these particular students translates into caring and worth among Southeast Middle's neediest population. Mr. Geisler is most proud of Southeast Middle's Coordination of Support Team (COST) efforts. Mr. Geisler views COST as the ultimate model of collaboration. COST efforts at Southeast Middle act as the first line of defense toward student health and human services efforts. After the COST collaborative meets, a student may need a parent conference, or a Student Attendance Review Team (SART) meeting. Health issues are also known to be resolved through this body of professionals. Referrals for an IEP, tutoring and/or psychological services may also be a viable solution/intervention through the COST collaborative. In the end, positive results yield positive outcomes. At Southeast Middle School, high attendance standards never go unrewarded. Mr. Geisler conducts a monthly attendance assembly, where students with perfect attendance are rewarded with certificates and prizes (which have been generously donated by LD 6). Mr. Geisler thanks attendance assistant Ms. Robledo for assisting him with his assemblies every month. Mr. Geisler stated that all of the collaboration at Southeast Middle has paid off. Attendance for the first three months was over 97%. The highest attendance rate ever reached within those three months was 97.74%. Southeast Middle can now boast at having the highest attendance rate among all of the schools in LD 6 and ranks number 3 among all middle school with the LAUSD. Southeast Middle School is a fine example of what happens when "Attendance Is Everybody's Business"!

Dionne Y. Ash: PSA Administrator's Spotlight on PSA Counselor:

Frances Fernandez



Frances started working at Ellen Ochoa Learning Center approximately three years ago. "It was challenging at first because I was only here once a week making it difficult to case manage", stated Mrs. Fernandez. Throughout the last couple of years the school has seen the need for PSA and has purchased additional days making it a little easier for her to juggle all three sites; the primary center, the elementary and middle school. Frances is the first PSA Counselor this school has ever had. The staff indicated that the improvement in attendance is evident in the high attendance statistics. Prior to having PSA at the school, Ellen Ochoa used to average 94% attendance but since having PSA the average has gone up to 98% in some months. "This is a big improvement for our school because we have a large rate of transiency in the city of Cudahy, which is one of the cities the school covers. Our school has attempted to resolve the attendance problem by having everyone work as a team, from the office to the classroom, administrators and PSA. We convey the to students as well as parents, the importance of having good attendance and the negative impact that poor attendance can have on academics. We utilize Connect-Ed to make telephone calls as early as 5:30am to improve tardies. It seems to be working so far, but being that we cannot get everyone here on time every day I still send out letters, make home visits, hold parent conferences, SART meetings and make SARF referrals when needed. I enjoy working at this school and with the Bell/Cudahy community."

If you are interested in seeing a particular topic covered in *Paving the Way*, or would like to share a promising child welfare and attendance practice, or recognize the work of a PSA counselor in your school, please contact:



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Green Tip: Switch your household cleaning products to those made from organic sources.